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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/975,968	10/15/2001	Rikio Shiba	862.C2245	1046

5514 7590 07/15/2005

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EXAMINER

FISCHER, ANDREW J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3627

DATE MAILED: 07/15/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/975,968

Applicant(s)

SHIBA ET AL.

Examiner

Andrew J. Fischer

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 April 2005.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,58 and 60-68 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 61-66 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,58,60,67 and 68 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Acknowledgements

1. Applicants' amendment filed November 29, 2004 is acknowledged. Accordingly, claims 1, 58, 60-68 remain pending.
2. This application is in an image file wrapper ("IFW") application. Applicants' response is therefore broken down before being placed into the IFW system (*i.e.* claims, remarks, drawings, etc. are separated and independently scanned). To ensure proper handling by the Examiner, the Examiner highly recommends Applicants place the application serial no (*e.g.* 09/123,456) in a header or footer (or other appropriate area) of *each* page submitted. At the very least, the Examiner highly recommends this practice for all pages listing the claims.
3. This Office Action is written in OACS. Because of this, the Examiner is unable to control formatting, paragraph numbering, font, spelling, line spacing, and/or other word processing issues. The Examiner sincerely apologizes for these errors.

Restriction

4. Applicants' traverse of Group I in the reply filed on April 13, 2005 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that "Applicant fails to see how the process of either claim 1 or 58 ... could possibly be performed by another materially different apparatus" This is not found persuasive because Applicants have failed to argue that the groups of inventions are not patentably distinct. If Applicants expressly equate their "materially different" standard with 'not patentably distinct,' the Examiner may reconsider the restriction.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §112 2nd Paragraph

5. The following is a quotation of the 2nd paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

6. Claims 1 and 58, 60, and 67 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

a. In claim 58, it is unclear if the history corresponds to the user log-in information or the used consumable.

b. In claim 67, it is unclear if the “order history” in line 2 and “the history” in line 3 is the same or different from “a history” as recited in claim 58. For prior art purposes only, the Examiner will interpret them as being the same (at least in part).

c. In claim 68, it is unclear if “a used consumable” as recited in line 6 is the same or different from “a used consumable” as recited in line 1. Appropriate correction is required. Applicants are reminded that “semantic indefiniteness of claims is not rendered unobjectionable merely because it *could* have been corrected. [Emphasis in original.]”

Allen Engineering Corp. v. Bartell Industries Inc., 299 F.3d 1336, 1349, 63 USPQ2d 1769, 1776 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (citations and quotations omitted).

a. Also in claim 68, the phrase beginning with “determining an incentive point” is indefinite since it does not make grammatical sense. In particular, the phrase “regarding a used consumable returned by a user” is indefinite because it is not known which phrase it modifies. “A claim must be read in accordance with the precepts of English grammar.” *In re Hyatt*, 708 F.2d 712, 714, 218 USPQ 195, 197 (Fed. Cir. 1983).

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7. The Examiner finds that because the claims are indefinite under 35 U.S.C. §112 2nd paragraph, it is impossible to properly construe claim scope at this time. See *Honeywell International Inc. v. ITC*, 68 USPQ2d 1023, 1030 (Fed. Cir. 2003) (“Because the claims are indefinite, the claims, by definition, cannot be construed.”). However, in accordance with MPEP §2173.06 and the USPTO’s policy of trying to advance prosecution by providing art rejections even though these claim are indefinite, the claims are construed and the art is applied *as much as practically possible*.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. §102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office Action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States. . . .

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

8. Claims 1, 58, 60, 67, and 68, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Haines et. al. (U.S. 6,233,409 B1)(“Haines ‘409”).

9. Claims 1, 58, 60, 67, and 68, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Allen (U.S. 6,233,408 B1)(“09”).

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Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103

10. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. §103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office Action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

11. Claims 1, 58, 60, 67, and 68, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hayward et. al. (U.S. 6,629,134 B2) ("Hayward '134"). Hayward '134 discloses receiving participating information indicating whether or not a user wishes to participate in a return service (inherent since the consumer is given the choice of whether or not to return the used cartridge); setting a flag in memory (indicating the whether or not the user wishes to participate); transmitting first information (the user submits user information); allowing the user to input date into the data fields (again, the user enters user information); transmitting second information which includes a message (the message telling the user to return the used cartridge); indicating a history (e.g. the user's mailing address history if already on file, previous purchases, and previous credit card(s) used). Hayward '134 does not directly disclose returns. It is the Examiner's position that providing for returns is old and well known in the art. See e.g. Poirier.

Therefore it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Hayward '134 to include history information and returns. Such a modification would have allowed the user to save time by not having to always type in mailing address, credit card, part number, or other reoccurring information.

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12. Claims 1, 58, 60, 67, and 68, as understood by the Examiner, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Haines '409.¹ It is the Examiner's principle position that the claims are anticipated.

However if not inherent, it is now admitted prior art that web sites store purchase history information of its returning customers. Therefore it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Haines '409 to include history information. Such a modification would have allowed the user to save time by not having to always type in mailing address, credit card, part number, or other reoccurring information.

13. For due process purposes, the Examiner again confirms that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer by indicating and defining claim limitations to have meanings other than their ordinary and accustomed meanings. To support this position, the Examiner again notes the following factual findings as first discussed in the previous Office Actions.² First, the Examiner has again carefully reviewed the specification and prosecution history and can not locate any lexicographic definition(s). Second, the Examiner finds that not only have Applicants not pointed to definitional statements in their specification or prosecution history, Applicants have also not pointed to a term or terms in a claim with which to draw in those statements³ with

¹ See MPEP §2112 expressly authorizing alternative §102/§103 rejections when the question of inherency is present in the anticipation rejection.

² See the Office Action mailed August 27, 2003, Paragraph No. 10; the Office Action mailed January 28, 2004, Paragraph No. 3; and the Office Action mailed August 24, 2004, Paragraph No. 11; and the Office Action mailed December 4, 2004, Paragraph No. 19.

³ "In order to overcome this heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary meaning of claim language, it is clear that a party wishing to use statements in the written description to confine or

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the required clarity, deliberateness, and precision.⁴ Third, after receiving express notice of the Examiner's position that lexicography is *not* invoked,⁵ Applicants' responses have not point out the "supposed errors" in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) (i.e. Applicants did not argue lexicography *was* invoked). Forth and to be sure of Applicants' intent, the Examiner also notes that Applicants have declined the Examiner's express invitation⁶ to be their own lexicographer. Finally, after receiving express notice of the preceding factual findings and conclusions, Applicants' latest response again fails to point out the supposed errors in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b). Moreover, Applicants' latest response—while fully considered by the Examiner—does not change the Examiner's reasonable conclusion that Applicants have decided not to be their own lexicographer. Therefore (and unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner), the heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary and accustomed meaning for claim terminology is confirmed. Accordingly, the claims continue to be

otherwise affect a patent's scope must, *at the very least*, point to a term or terms in the claim with which to draw in those statements. [Emphasis added.]" *Johnson Worldwide Assocs. v. Zebco Corp.*, 175 F.3d 985, 989, 50 USPQ2d 1607, 1610 (Fed. Cir. 1999).

⁴ "The patentee's lexicography must, of course, appear 'with reasonable clarity, deliberateness, and precision' before it can affect the claim." *Renishaw PLC v. Marposs Societa' per Azioni*, 158 F.3d 1243, 1249, 48 USPQ2d 1117, 1121 (Fed. Cir. 1998) citing *In re Paulsen*, 30 F.3d 1475, 1480, 31 USPQ2d 1671, 1674 (Fed. Cir. 1994).

⁵ See Note 2.

⁶ See e.g. *Fuji Photo Film Co. v. ITC*, 386 F.3d 1095, 72 USPQ2d 1769, 1773 (Fed. Cir. 2004) (noting that applicants' failure to correct the examiner's characterization of an element of claim interpretation is nevertheless an indication of how a claim should be interpreted since applicant declined the examiner's express invitation to correct a possible error in claim interpretation: "applicant's attention was called to the examiner's interpretation of [how the element was

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interpreted with their "broadest reasonable interpretation," *In re Morris*, 127 F.3d 1048, 1054, 44 USPQ2d 1023, 1027 (Fed. Cir. 1997), and the Examiner continues to rely heavily and extensively on this interpretation.⁷

14. Under the broadest reasonable interpretation standard noted above and unless expressly modified in this Office Action, the Examiner maintains his interpretations including the statements and/or definitions of claim limitations as noted in previous Office Action. Those previous definitions are part of the administrative record and, in accordance with *In re Morris*, are provided simply as a factual source to support the Examiner's claim interpretations (and ultimately the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences claim interpretations if necessary⁸) during ex parte examination.

15. It is the Examiner's position that providing for the return of products is old and well known in the art. See Poirier, pp 146+.

Official Notice

16. Since Applicants did not seasonably traverse the Official Notice statement(s) as stated in the previous Office Action (mailed December 4, 2004, Paragraph No. 18), the Official Notice statement(s) are taken to be admitted prior art. See MPEP §2144.03.

interpreted by the examiner, and] applicant was invited to correct the examiner's interpretation—an invitation the applicant did not accept."

⁷ See 37 C.F.R. §1.104(c)(3) which states in part: "the examiner may rely upon admissions by applicant . . . as to *any matter* affecting patentability [Emphasis added.]"

⁸ See *Gechter v. Davidson*, 116 F.3d 1454, 1460, 43 USPQ2d 1030, 1035 (Fed. Cir. 1997) ("[W]e hold that the Board is required to set forth in its opinions specific findings of fact and conclusions of law adequate to form a basis for our review.").

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Response to Arguments

17. Applicants' arguments filed April 13, 2005 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Prior art

18. Regarding claim 1, Applicants argue that "the applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest anything with regard to a sever that allows a user to return a used consumable"⁹

However a review of claim 1 will reveal that it claims "[a] process of ordering a new consumable" Because claim 1 is directed to *ordering* and Applicants arguments relate to "a return," the arguments are not applicable to claim 1. For these reasons alone, Applicants' arguments with respect to claim 1 have been considered but are not persuasive.

19. Applicants remaining arguments have been considered but art not persuasive.

Conclusion

20. Applicants' amendment filed April 13, 2005 necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action (if any). Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP §706.07(a). Applicants are reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after

⁹ Applicants' Remarks filed April 13, 2005, page 13 ~ 17-18.

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the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

21. References considered pertinent to Applicants' disclosure are listed on form PTO-892. Unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner using appropriate designations on form PTO-892 (e.g. page numbers, chapter selections, or other indicia), all references listed on form PTO-892 are cited in their entirety.

22. The following two (2) citations to the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure ("MPEP") apply to this Office Action: MPEP citations to Chapters 100, 200, 500, 600, 700, 1000, 1100, 1300, 1400, 1500, 1700, 1800, 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500, 2600, and 2700 are from the MPEP 8th Edition, Rev. 2, May 2004. All remaining MPEP citations are from MPEP 8th Edition, August 2001.

23. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

24. Because this application is now final, Applicant(s) are reminded of the USPTO's after final practice as discussed in MPEP §714.12 and §714.13 and that entry of amendments after

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final is *not* a matter of right. “The refusal of an examiner to enter an amendment after final rejection of claims is a matter of discretion.” *In re Berger*, 279 F.3d 975, 984, 61 USPQ2d 1523, 1529 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (citations omitted). Furthermore, suggestions or examples of claim language provided by the Examiner are just that—suggestions or examples—and do not constitute a formal requirement mandated by the Examiner. Unless stated otherwise by an express indication that a claim is “allowed,” exemplary claim language provided by the Examiner to overcome a particular rejection or to change claim interpretation has *not been addressed* with respect to other aspects of patentability (*e.g.* §101 patentable subject matter, §112 1st paragraph written description and enablement, §112 2nd paragraph indefiniteness, and §102 and §103 prior art). Therefore, any claim amendment submitted under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 that incorporates an Examiner suggestion or example or simply changes claim interpretation will nevertheless require further consideration and/or search and a patentability determination as noted above.

25. Also in accordance with *In re Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338, 1344-45, 61 USPQ2d 1430, 1434-35 (Fed. Cir. 2002), the Examiner finds that Nathan J. Muller’s Desktop Encyclopedia of the Internet, (“Desktop Encyclopedia”) is additional evidence of what is basic knowledge or common sense to one of ordinary skill in this art. Muller’s Desktop Encyclopedia is a practical reference that clearly explains Internet services, applications, protocols, access methods, development tools, administration and management, standards, and regulations. Because of the reference’s basic content (which is self-evident upon examination of the reference) and after further review of the entire record including the prior art now of record in conjunction with the factors as discussed in MPEP §2141.03 (where practical), the Examiner finds that the Desktop

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Encyclopedia is primarily directed towards those of low skill in this art. Because the reference is directed towards those of low skill in this art, the Examiner finds that one of ordinary skill in this art must—at the very least—be aware of and understand the knowledge and information contained within the Desktop Encyclopedia.

26. Also in accordance with *In re Lee*, 277 F.3d at 1344-45, 61 USPQ2d at 1434-35, the Examiner finds that the Borland's Paradox for Windows User's Guide is additional evidence of what is basic knowledge or common sense to one of ordinary skill in this art. The reference is cited in its entirety. Paradox for Windows User's Guide exemplifies a typical relational database system. Because of the reference's basic content (which is self-evident upon examination of the reference) and after further review of the entire record including the prior art now of record in conjunction with the factors as discussed in MPEP §2141.03 (where practical), the Examiner finds that the Paradox for Windows User's Guide is primarily directed towards those of low skill in this art. Because the reference is directed towards those of low skill in this art, the Examiner finds that one of ordinary skill in this art must—at the very least—be aware of and understand the knowledge and information contained within the reference.

27. In accordance with the USPTO's goals of customer service, compact prosecution, and reduction of cycle time, the Examiner has made every effort to clarify his position regarding claim interpretation and any rejections or objections in this application. Furthermore, the Examiner has again provided Applicants with notice—for due process purposes—of his position regarding his factual determinations and legal conclusions. The Examiner notes and thanks Applicants for their "Remarks" (beginning on page 10) traversing the Examiner's positions on various points. If Applicants disagree with any additional factual determination or legal

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conclusion made by the Examiner in this Office Action whether expressly stated or implied,¹⁰ the Examiner respectfully reminds Applicants to properly traverse the Examiner's position(s) in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) in their next properly filed response. By addressing these issues now, matters where the Examiner and Applicants agree can be eliminated allowing the Examiner and Applicants to focus on areas of disagreement (if any) with the goal towards allowance in the shortest possible time. If Applicants have any questions regarding the Examiner's positions or have other questions regarding this communication or even previous communications, Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Examiner Andrew J. Fischer whose telephone number is (571) 272-6779. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's immediate supervisor, Alexander Kalinowski, can be reached at (571) 272-6771. The fax number for facsimile responses is now (571) 273-8300.



Andrew J. Fischer
Primary Examiner
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AJF
July 11, 2005

¹⁰ E.g., if the Examiner rejected a claim under §103 with two references, although not directly stated, it is the Examiner's implied position that the references are analogous art.